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ABSTRACT

Representatives of three major universities, with the help of about 30 consultants and over 200 teachers and several thousand students in 24 field-testing schools, over a two-year period prepared and tested a handbook or catalog of representative performance objectives in English for grades 9-12, which is included as an appendix to this report. The field-testing of a preliminary version of the catalog revealed its usefulness not only in the designated grades but also, in many instances, its adaptability to grades 7 and 8. Conclusions include: (1) The fears of performance objectives, held by many teachers of English, are unwarranted; (2) It would be a mistake to attempt to use mere mathematical measurement of accomplishment in many segments of English; (3) In teacher education, prospective teachers need to be helped to learn to think in terms of what kinds of responses they may expect from students. Recommendations include: (1) The handbook-catalog should be used as widely as possible in college courses for pre-service and in-service teachers of secondary school English; (2) Teachers of both junior and senior high school English should be encouraged to use a published version of the handbook-catalog in establishing objectives for their classes. (Author/CK)

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FINAL REPORT

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REPRESENTATIVE PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES IN ENGLISH

GRADES 9-12

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Appendix: Handbook of Representative Performance Objectives in High School English

REPRESENTATIVE BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES IN ENGLISH:

GRADES 9-12

Summary

Representatives of the University of Illinois, Indiana University, and Purdue University, with the help of about thirty consultants and, later, the assistance of over two hundred teachers and several thousand students in twenty-four field-testing schools, over a two-year period prepared and tested a handbook or catalog of representative performance objectives in English for grades 9-12, which is included as the appendix to this report. The field-testing of a preliminary version of the catalog revealed its usefulness not only in the designated grades but also, in many instances, its adaptability to grades 7 and 8.

Introduction

Early in 1969 the Research Branch of the United States Office of Education sent out copies of a request for a proposal for the preparation of a catalog of behavioral objectives for English in grades 9-12. Representatives of the University of Illinois, Indiana University, and Purdue University jointly submitted a proposal, which after revision was accepted by the Office of Education.

Work on the project began June 15, 1969, and continued until June 15, 1971, with a two-month extension to August 15, 1971. The University of Illinois was the contracting agency, but the seven co-directors, representing the three universities, worked on a basis of strict equality.

National interest in behavioral objectives (or performance objectives, as the directors prefer to call them) has been running very high. Enthusiastically applauded by some teachers and administrators but looked upon with apprehension or distaste or even repugnance by others, such objectives have been written about very extensively in the professional literature and have been the subject of endless discussion at professional conferences. Many English teachers in particular -- as revealed by discussions and resolutions at annual conventions of the National Council of Teachers of English -- have been fearful that performance objectives in their subject may be regarded in a mechanistic fashion and that the humanistic values of English may be disregarded or lost in statements of objectives that describe precise behaviors, and that such objectives may often degenerate into statements about easily measured trivia.

The request for a proposal, however, provided an important safeguard. It indicated that the proposed catalog should be related to the general aims of education (level 1 objectives) and to the general objectives for the study of English (level 2). The level 3 objectives "for each study area composing the field of high school English," which were to form the body of the catalog, were to be based upon the first two levels. Thus those who prepared the catalog of necessity constantly held in mind not only mechanical and easily measured aspects of the subject but also the

humanistic goals to which teachers of English generally subscribe.

A fourth level, "objectives for the specific units of content in local curriculum guides," was not to be incorporated in the catalog. However, for purposes of illustration and clarification, the directors decided that they should include a number of "representative enabling objectives" which would be similar to those on level 4.

In their proposal, the directors indicated that the catalog they would prepare would consist of representative objectives. Decades ago a researcher uncovered 1,581 aims for English instruction, and the number has unquestionably grown since that time. To list all possible or even all desirable aims, even if the directors and consultants had been omniscient enough to do so, would have resulted in a catalog far too bulky for quick and efficient use. The directors, however, in keeping with the original request for proposal, have attempted to incorporate examples of all major objectives for secondary school English.

Methods and Procedures

The following chart summarizes the major steps in the project:

PRELIMINARY

FIRST YEAR

Development and revision of proposal

Further development of catalog plans; selection of consultants

Further development of field-testing plans; selection of schools

Review of general goals and objectives for secondary English

Preparation of sample performance objectives based on general goals and objectives

Two-day conference with consultants; development of first approximation of catalog

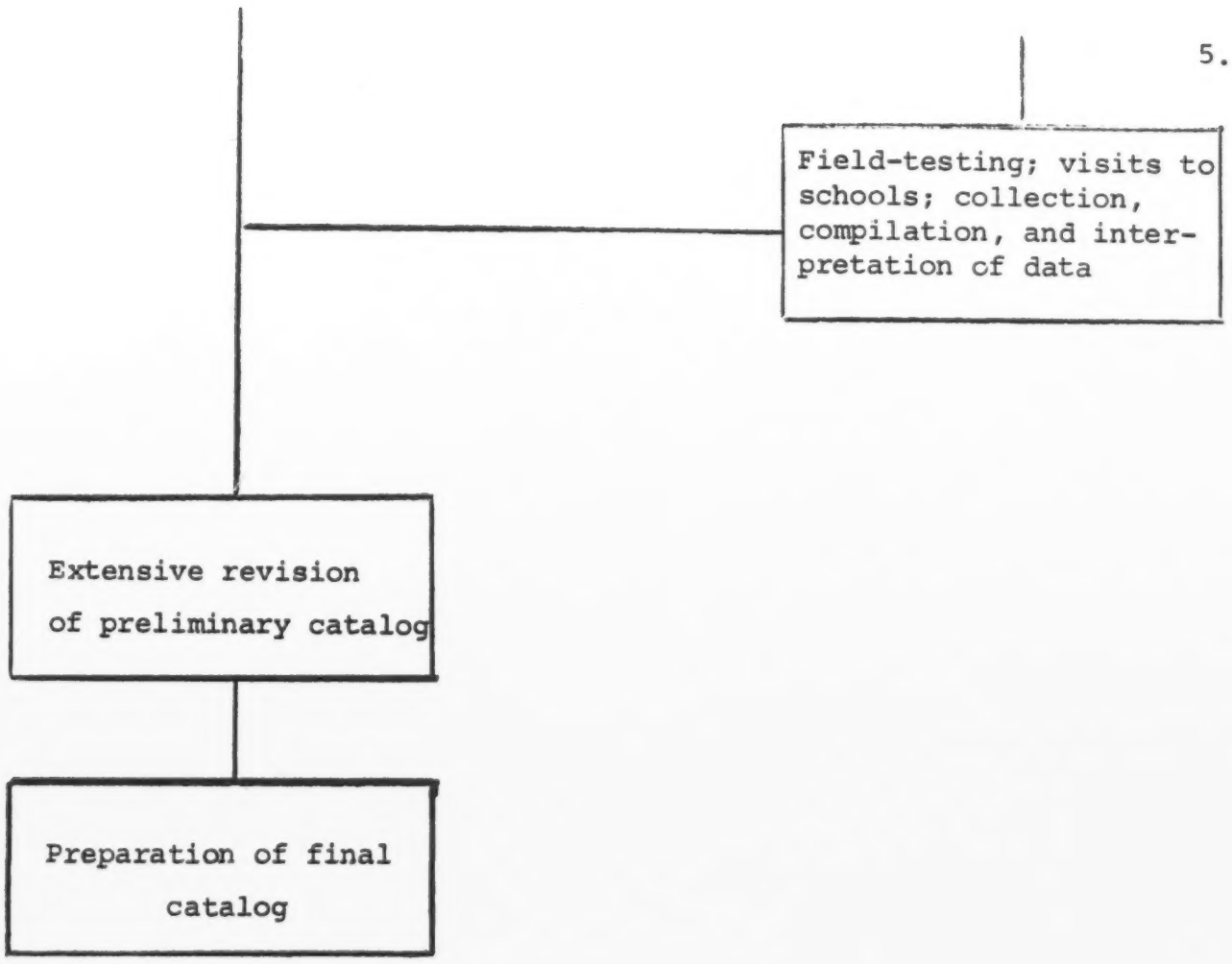
Drafts and redrafts of preliminary catalog; second conference with consultants; further revision

Refinement and modification of field-testing plans

SECOND YEAR

Completion of preliminary catalog

Two-day conference with representatives of field-testing schools


Field-testing; visits to schools; collection, compilation, and interpretation of data
Extensive revision of preliminary catalog
Preparation of final catalog

The chart leaves out the numerous enabling activities of the directors: many meetings of the directors themselves; considerable correspondence with consultants, field-testing schools, and individuals or groups that had become interested in the project; meetings with small numbers of consultants to supplement the group meetings; participation by directors in national, state, and local conferences; articles and talks prepared by directors; telephone calls; and many routine matters concerned with supplies, services, financial details, and the like.

Relatively few changes were made in the procedures outlined in the proposal as initially approved. The only one of major importance concerned

the field-testing. Originally the field-testing had been conceived as involving control groups and experimental classes, the latter of which would be taught by teachers using the preliminary catalog; the purpose would have been to determine measurable gains. Upon the advice of consultants David Krathwohl and Thomas Hastings, who pointed out that the real purpose of the field-testing was to obtain critical reactions to the various parts of the preliminary catalog, the procedures were modified to eliminate the control groups and to solicit detailed comments and criticisms that would be of use in the revision, in order to make the final product as clear, comprehensive, and useful as possible.

Results and Findings

Obviously the "results" of the project consist of the catalog itself, included in this report as the appendix. Responses from the field-testing schools, even though they included many suggestions for improvement, indicated general agreement that the use of performance objectives does have value in the secondary English classroom, because such objectives do translate into specific outcomes the often-vague goals of English and thus clarify the purposes of English study in the minds of both teachers and students, and also because they frequently lead to increased student involvement in the instructional-learning process.

Teacher after teacher said or wrote, "I want to be sure to use this again next year," "My students have been more interested in English this year," "Students took more initiative," "Some of the other teachers now

plan to use this objective," "The catalog helped us to find important segments of English that we have been grossly neglecting," and "The catalog should be of use to us as we make revisions in our curriculum."

Conclusions and Recommendations

Perhaps the most important conclusion of the study is that fears of performance objectives, held by many teachers of English, are unwarranted. Teachers in the field-testing schools felt in general that the use of the objectives included in the preliminary catalog did not in any way interfere with attainment of the humanistic goals of English instruction. On the contrary, students' and teachers' clear understanding of goals and objectives led to greater student involvement and initiative, and thus assisted in attainment of such usually vague goals as "knowledge," "understanding," "appreciation," or "acceptance of ideals." Measurement of accomplishment did not have to be restricted to trivia, as some teachers feared.

A second conclusion is that it would be a mistake to attempt to use mere mathematical measurement of accomplishment in many segments of English. With reference to students' learning with regard to literature, for example, it is mistaken to state that "85 per cent of the students will do thus and so 90 percent of the time." The type of measurement most suitable for English is often indirect and cummulative: students' reactions and evidence of attitudes as revealed over a considerable period of time through such responses as class contributions, individual projects, extensiveness of reading, voluntary writing and speaking, and experimentation with language and other forms of communication.

As the request for proposal indicated, the catalog was prepared specifically for use of teachers of English in grades 9 through 12, with students of various levels of ability. However, a number of teachers tried out some of the objectives with grades 7 and 8, and found that often the objectives were adaptable to those grades. Therefore a third conclusion is that the catalog may prove useful to teachers and students in junior high school English and not just in the senior high school.

A final conclusion is that in teacher education, prospective teachers need to be helped to learn to think in terms of what kinds of responses they may hope for and expect from students. In other words, teacher education needs to become more performance-oriented. At present, for historical reasons, a prospective teacher (like many other college students) is far too often required only to regurgitate facts presented by textbooks and lecturers: taught in such fashion himself, he teaches similarly when he gets into his own classroom. If colleges, however, will put greater stress upon initiative, individual projects, and varied performance outcomes, teachers will be much more likely to emphasize student performance other than the mere repetition of factual information.

The directors' chief recommendations are these:

1. The handbook-catalog should be used as widely as possible in college courses for pre-service and in-service teachers of secondary school English.
2. Teachers of both junior and senior high school English should be encouraged to use a published version of the handbook-catalog in establishing objectives for their classes, in helping students

in helping students to develop individual projects, in departmental discussions concerning curriculum, and in curricular revision.

3. After extensive use of the publication and the gathering of responses to it, the handbook-catalog should be revised.
4. As a follow-up of this study, which concentrated upon level 3 objectives, there should be a study intended to provide additional help in translating level 3 objectives into the more specific level 4 objectives, which will be related to particular literary works and to a larger number of what the directors have called "representative enabling objectives."